
Heavy overnight snow has caused widespread disruption across much of eastern England and the Midlands. Road and rail services have been badly affected, there has been disruption to flights and many schools have closed. Rob Broomby reports:

It was the heaviest snowfall in 18 years. Bus services in London carrying 6 million people have been cancelled. 10 of 11 underground lines are completely or partly **suspended**. The capital's main airport Heathrow has closed both runways for a while and there are still significant delays and cancellations, and there are no flights at all from City airport. Others are suffering long delays and cancellations too.

Several **docks** to the west have become **iced up**. And thousands are without piped water in Wales due to the frozen pipes. Hundreds of schools have been closed across the country and children at least are enjoying **conditions**.

The British like to complain that other countries **handle** the snow better than they do, that **the merest sugaring of snowflakes** brings normal life to **a standstill** amidst transport chaos. So why does it happen? Well truly icy conditions here are rare indeed. So why make a massive investment to combat extreme weather conditions that may not be replayed for another 18 years?

At an individual level the costs of being prepared like some Alpine countries would be high too. The British, for instance, are not required to have **winter tyres** fitted to cars at the start of the season, nor do they **routinely** carry **snow chains**. On the other hand the Brits do like to complain, and secretly they also like being told... sorry you can't get to work.

Rob Broomby, BBC

Vocabulary and definitions

suspended	if a transport service is suspended, it temporarily stops operating
docks	places where ships can moor; wharfs, piers
iced up	frozen, with a coating of ice on the surface
conditions	here, the weather
handle	tackle, deal with
the merest sugaring of snowflakes	even the thinnest covering/layer of snow
a standstill	when everything stops (here, all means of transportation)
winter tyres	tyres with a thick pattern that stops a vehicle from sliding on ice or snow (winter tyres are specially designed to be able to bend easily at sub-zero temperatures, without breaking or cracking)
routinely	usually, repeatedly
snow chains	special chains that are fitted to a vehicle's tyres to stop it from sliding on ice or snow

More on this story: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7864395.stm>

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2009/02/090202_uk_snow.shtml